

CLAIMS

1. A method of assessing the movement of articles moving along opposite paths of movement, each of the articles having transceiving means (16) and means (20, 26) for monitoring a performance characteristic of the article, the method comprising each of the articles (V1) moving along a first (10) of the paths of movement transmitting data derived from the monitored performance characteristic, and at least one article (V2) moving along a second (12) of the paths of movement receiving transmissions from the articles moving along the first of the paths of movement, making an assessment of the nature of movement of the articles along the first path of movement from the data derived from the monitored performance characteristic, producing a report containing the assessment and transmitting the report for reception by subsequent articles (V3) moving along the first of the paths of movement.

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2. A method as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the articles are vehicles (V1, V2, V3) and in that the monitored performance characteristic is the speed of the respective vehicles.

3. A method of assessing the movement of vehicles, comprising first (V1) vehicles moving along a first path (10) of movement transmitting signals representative of their respective speed and their identity, at least one second vehicle (V2) moving along a second (12), opposite path of movement receiving the signals from a plurality of the first vehicles (V1), analysing the signals, assessing the nature of movement of the first vehicles along the first path of movement, compiling a report containing the assessment of the nature of movement of the first vehicles together with an indication of the distance to the location at which the signals from the first vehicles were received, and transmitting the report for reception by a third vehicle (V3) travelling along the first path of movement behind the first vehicles.

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4. A method as claimed in claim 3, characterised by the third vehicle receiving the report from the second vehicle, analysing the report and, if relevant, displaying the nature of the traffic problem together with a distance indicator to an occupant of the third vehicle.

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5. A method as claimed in claim 3, characterised in that the at least one second vehicle amends the distance indicator as a function of the time elapsed since the traffic report was compiled.

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6. A method as claimed in claim 3 or 4, characterised in that the at least one second vehicle ceases to transmit a traffic report after the elapsed time exceeds a predetermined threshold value.

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7. A method as claimed in claim 3, characterised in that the at least one second vehicle amends the distance indicator as a function of the distance travelled since the traffic report was compiled.

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8. A method as claimed in claim 3 or 7, characterised in that the at least one second vehicle ceases to transmit a traffic report after the distance travelled exceeds a predetermined threshold value.

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9. A method as claimed in any one of claims 3 to 8, characterised in that the at least one second vehicle transmits a signal indicative of it not having any traffic reports to relay.

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10. A system for assessing the movement of vehicles travelling along opposite paths of movement (10, 12), each vehicle having a transceiver (16), means (20, 26) for monitoring the speed of the vehicle, means (20) for compiling a speed report including vehicle identifying indicia for transmission by the transceiver, means (16) for receiving a plurality of speed reports from in-range vehicles travelling along an opposite path of movement to that of the receiving vehicle, means (38) for analysing the received speed reports, means

(20) for assessing the nature of movement of the vehicles transmitting the received speed reports, means (38) for compiling a traffic report containing the assessment of the nature of movement of the vehicles transmitting the speed reports together with an indication of the distance to the locality at which the speed signals were transmitted, and means (16) for transmitting the traffic report for reception by a vehicle (V3) travelling along the said opposite path of movement.

11. An apparatus for use in a vehicle and for assessing the movement of vehicles travelling along opposite paths of movement (10,12), the apparatus comprising a transceiver (16), means (20, 26) for monitoring the speed of the vehicle, means (20) for compiling a speed report including vehicle identifying indicia for transmission by the transceiver, means (16) for receiving a plurality of speed reports from in-range vehicles travelling along an opposite path of movement to that of the receiving vehicle, means (38) for analysing the received signal reports, means (20) for assessing the nature of movement of the vehicles transmitting the received speed reports, means (38) for compiling a traffic report containing the assessment of the nature of movement of the vehicles transmitting the speed reports together with an indication of the distance to the locality at which the speed signals were transmitted, and means (16) for transmitting the traffic report for reception by a vehicle (V3) travelling along the said opposite path of movement.